

Ultimate Outdoor Survival Style Adventure: Summer Camp 2006, Camp Otterbein,  
Logan Ohio

Brochure Description: "This event is for older campers who love being in the woods. Have fun practicing skills such as fire-building, orienteering, and tracking. We'll observe day and night time animals and animal habitats by watching them in the wild. The week will culminate in camping out in the North Woods with a survival adventure in which campers will find their way back to main camp. Other adventures include High Ropes, boating on the Hocking River and mountain boarding."

Attached is a copy of the schedule we planned for this week of camp. We first opened the event for 10 campers (5 females and 5 males in grades 8-12) We were challenged (happily) at one point by campers on a waiting list and increased our capacity. We ended up with 17 campers at camp on Sunday, the first day of camp!

Planning and implementation: Creative Juices and Resource for the Week, Scott Seese; Program Director, Adam Hamm, Assistant with Maintenance, John Shepler; Snake and Wildlife Presenter, Jason Snider; 4 counselors: Jeff Burns, Greg Feustel, Molly Harbarger, Malissa Corbett; Director, Kirstin Shrom.

Below are the questions we asked and answered in evaluation of this week...

Did the camp accomplish what you wanted it to? Why or why not?

The original idea of the camp was not accomplished fully. I (Scott) had foreseen much more involved teaching and hands on learning through camper trial and error. Many of the activities did not have the same drive or effect that I had planned on. The last night when the campers made their own brush huts and spent the night in them was a good closing the week. The camp was a success overall, but many little planning bits could have better coordinated the week.

Did the campers learn/experience what you wanted them to? Why or why not?

There were many positive learning opportunities. Specific wilderness survival tactics were given in which the campers could immediately put to use. Campers enjoyed looking for edible plants and other things in the woods and building brush huts followed by their sleep out in the woods. The guest speaker, Jason the snake guy, brought in a good hands on knowledge of some of the animals that a person might come across in the wild, and brought in some cool snakes. I was a little disappointed with the amount of survival learning opportunities taken away by other activities at camp, one of which being the construction of the permanent shelter site. While the intent was to build something of permanence for future campers, the time and effort needed to finish such a task was greatly underestimated. Even though it was eventually finished, the stresses involved with the unexpected work took away from the morale and flow of the rest of the camp. Most campers enjoyed all of the week. Their least favorite things were the rain (it was a wet, wet, week!) and one camper who went home, realizing that this was more of a challenge than he had expected. We need to be careful that we are describing the event accurately. It includes higher levels of challenges that other events do not.

Are you running this event again?

Yes, we plan to run the event again this summer.

What will you change and what will you keep the same?

Having had some experience with how the event's activities flow, we have a better understanding of how to plan and deal with different situations. We expect to give more of the wilderness survival experience and more of a challenge aspect to the campers through the week by using the strategies they learn. I will (Scott) keep the brush hut building aspect on the last night as a closing for the week. It definitely tops off what the camp's purpose is held for.

What was your biggest learning from coordinating this event that would be good advice for other camps who want to run similar programs?

Coming into the week, I (Scott) was relying heavily upon myself to teach most of the skills. When time stressors were put into the mix, I was not always able to give the full explanation or even cancel certain activities. My change for next time would be to give a better explanation to the counselors so that they could be more prepared to add their own insight and when I am not able to be there, they would be able to continue on with the schedule. As a camp staff, we talked about how we could better resource Scott in his leadership of this event.

Other comments:

We were THRILLED to see how many campers of this age group were interested in this type of event. We often hear that we are missing the needs of today's youth and that we are challenged by having "newer and more" styles of programming...some folks call it "edutainment." We expect to see some returning campers and some new campers and hope for 15. We like the smaller group camp for the dynamic that we were creating.